

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PORT O 02043 231719Z

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SUBJ: MEDIA REACTION: THE QUESTION OF IMMUNITY FOR FORMER
PRESIDENT NIXON

FOR IOR/M: ILA

FOLLOWING EDITORIAL APPEARED IN TRINIDAD GUARDIAN AUGUST 22.
BLOCK QUOTES FOLLOW:

1. ONE YEAR AGO TODAY A CONFIDENT PRESIDENT NIXON HIMSELF
TERMED WATERGATE "WATER UNDER THE BRIDGE." HE WAS AS WRONG
IN THIS ASSESSMENT AS HE HAS BEEN IN SO MUCH ELSE RELATING TO
WATERGATE, THOUGH IT WAS NOT AN ERROR OF JUDGMENT OF THE KIND
HE ADMITTED AND ASKED TO BE ABSOLVED FOR IN CONFESSING TO HIS
ROLE IN THE COVER-UP.
2. MR. NIXON APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN ERROR-PRONE IN HIS CHOICE
OF MEN, FOR SO MANY OF THOSE HE PUT AROUND HIM OR WERE RECRUITED
BY HIS AIDES HAVE CONFESSED TO WRONG-DOING, HAVE LANDED IN JAIL
OR ARE AWAITING CRIMINAL TRIAL.
3. HARDLY CAN A MAN IN HIS FORMER EXALTED POSITION HAVE
BEEN GUILTY SO FREQUENTLY OF ERROR OF JUDGMENT IN CHOOSING
PEOPLE FOR PUBLIC OFFICE. SO MANY OF THEM COULD NOT SAY NO
WHEN CONFRONTED WITH THE CHOICE BETWEEN DOING RIGHT AND DOING
WRONG.
4. THERE MAY HAVE BEEN ERRORS OF JUDGMENT TOO IN GIVING EFFECT

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PAGE 02 PORT O 02043 231719Z

TO HIS PREDILECTION FOR WHAT, IN AN UNLAWYERLY PHRASE, HE CALLED

"STRICT CONSTRUCTIONISTS" IN SELECTING JUDGES OF THE SUPREME COURT. HE COULD HARDLY HAVE EXPECTED HIS SELECTEES TO JOINING THEIR COLLEAGUES IN UNANIMOUSLY STRIKING HIM THE FATAL BLOW WHICH HASTENED HIS DEPARTURE FROM THE PRESIDENCY. THEIR LOYALTY WAS TO THE CONSTITUTION AND NOT TO HIM.

5. THERE ARE A NUMBER OF FINE PRINCIPLES OF CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS IN THE CONSTITUTIONAL LAW OF THE UNITED STATES. THEY ARE ENSHRINED IN SUCH PHRASES AS EQUALITY BEFORE THE LAW, EQUAL JUSTICE, THE RULE OF LAW, FIFTH AMENDMENT RIGHTS, FREE PRESS AND FAIR TRIAL.

6. ALL OR SOME OF THEM ARE RELEVANT IN THE WAKE OF THE ORDERLY SUCCESSION TO THE PRESIDENCY OF MR. GERALD FORD AND THE IMPENDING CONFIRMATION OF HIS NOMINEE TO THE VICE-PRESIDENCY, FORMER GOVERNOR NELSON ROCKEFELLER OF NEW YORK.

7. THERE DOES NOT APPEAR TO BE MUCH HOPE OF MR. NIXON, NOW THAT HE HAS CONTRIVED TO ESCAPE IMPEACHMENT, YET ENTERING UPON THE ENJOYMENT OF A QUIET PRIVATE LIFE. HE HAS ALREDY BEEN SUMMONED TO TESTIFY BY HIS FORMER AIDE JOHN ERLICHMAN, ACCUSED OF CONSPIRACY WITH EX-ATTORNEY-GENERAL JOHN MITCHELL ET AL IN THE WATERGATE CONSPIRACY TRIAL OPENING SEPTEMBER 9. WILL HE RESIST RETURNING TO WASHINGTON AS A WITNESS OR WILL HE COME AND "PLEAD THE FIFTH" STANDING ON HIS RIGHTS AGAINST SELF-CRIMINATION?

8. THEN THERE IS THE QUESTION OF THE GRAND JURY RAISING HIS STATUS FROM UNINDICTED TO INDICTED CO-CONSPIRATOR. WILL HE BE GIVEN IMMUNITY BECAUSE OF THE INDIGNITY WHICH HAS ALREADY BEFALLEN HIM AND, IF SO WHAT ABOUT THOSE WHO ARE ALREADY IN JAIL OR ABOUT TO BE TRIED?

9. HOW WILL IMMUNITY FOR HIM SQUARE WITH EQUAL JUSTICE IN THE EYES OF THE PEOPLE OF THE U.S.? THE NATION'S BUSINESS MUST GO ON, ITS CRUCIAL PROBLEMS SOLVED, BUT THESE ARE DIVISIVE ISSUES WHICH THE NEW PRESIDENT AND THE SPECIAL PROSECUTOR CANNOT WISH AWAY.
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